

to add more money to the VOCA Fund and continue to meet the needs of victims across our country.

I have been an advocate for victims since my early days as a prosecutor with Harris County District Attorney's office. There are a few cases that have stood out in my career and influenced my life in a significant way. One such case was that of a young woman, who was as student at the University of Houston. She was the victim of a brutal rape and assault. She was abducted at gunpoint at a gas station, taken to a wooded area, raped, beaten, and left for dead. Through her brave determination, she was able to identify her attacker and I was assigned to prosecute him.

Today, victims are assigned court advocates during the trial. Back then, she had no one. No one was there to help her through the emotional stress of a rape and the grueling task of confronting her attacker in court. She did it though, she got through the trial and we sent her attacker to the penitentiary for life. But her story wasn't over, you can't wrap it up with the bang of a gavel and nice neat bow.

Because there were little-to-no resources available to victims at that time, she was not able to cope with the aftermath of her assault. You see, for the victim the ordeal is not over once the trial ends. It follows them day after day and spreads through their life like a cancer out of control. In the following months, her husband left her and sued her for custody of their two children—taking away the only two reasons worth living for.

She spiraled out-of-control. Without anyone to turn to, and losing her family, she couldn't escape the pain. In a hand written note, that I keep with me to this day, she said "I'm tired of running." Madam Speaker, the reality is, she didn't have anyone to run to and sadly ended her life. This ought not to be. This was a tragedy that could have been avoided, a tragedy that continues to influence my life and career.

One of the first things I did as a Member of Congress was establish the bipartisan Congressional Victim's Rights Caucus to advocate and provide a voice for crime victims. I currently co-chair the Caucus with my good friend and victim crusader, Congressman JIM COSTA (CA-20). There are caucuses for everything under the sun in D.C., but there was nothing that advocated solely for crime victims. It seems they are always the ones that are forgotten.

The VOCA Fund is one of those things that is close to my heart and is something, like the victims it benefits, worth fighting for. Created by Congress in 1984 to provide Federal support to Federal, State, and local programs that assist victims of crime, VOCA provides assistance to over 4,400 agencies and 3.8 million victims every year. And it doesn't cost the taxpayers anything! The VOCA Fund is derived entirely from fines and penalties paid by offenders, not taxpayer revenues. But every year, we have to fight to keep it safe for victims. The Washington bureaucrats try to rob this fund for other pet projects.

VOCA funds several important programs, such as domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, children protection agencies, and pays direct expenses to victims of violence, such as assault, rape, and child abuse.

The Children's Assessment Center in Houston is a recipient of VOCA funding and is the very best of its kind. They take sexually as-

saulted kids and help them through the trauma of recovery and trial. The Houston Children's Assessment Center in Houston became the model for others across the country. The services they provide to children who have been victims of crime are invaluable and the most advanced methods used today. Without the knowledge and compassion of thousands of dedicated people who work on behalf of victims, more and more victims would end up like that young wife and mother that desperately tried to hold it together, but couldn't take the pain any longer.

As a constant reminder, I keep that handwritten note on my desk. As a judge, it was my pleasure to hand down one of my many creative sentences and see how far we have come in recognizing the needs of victims. I have dedicated my life to helping victims and proudly serve on the Board of Directors for the Houston Children's Assessment Center and the National Children's Alliance in Washington D.C.

Madam Speaker, criminals should continue to pay for the system they have created. They should pay for the expenses victims incur because of crime. Criminals need to pay the rent on the courthouse—crime victims have already paid enough. No more victims should run.

And That's Just The Way It Is.

SUDAN AND IRAN DIVESTMENT BILLS

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 30, 2007

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of three bills under consideration today in the House of Representatives: the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act (H.R. 180), the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act (H.R. 2347), and a bill to amend the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (H.R. 957).

With a combination of sanctions and divestment, these important pieces of legislation demonstrate our nation's commitment to human rights and the rule of law with our actions and not just our words. The governments of Sudan and Iran must understand the consequences of their deplorable and inhumane policies.

As the genocide continues in the Darfur region of Sudan, many state and local governments have chosen not to invest in companies that do business in Sudan. Until the government of Sudan takes transparent steps to end the violence and increase humanitarian access to the refugees in Darfur, divestment remains an essential tool for pressuring the Sudanese government. The Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act supports efforts by local government and universities to divest from companies that conduct business in Sudan. Additionally, it prohibits the federal government from entering into contracts with these companies as well. Coupled with diplomatic pressure, the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act is a significant step in the fight against the horrific genocide taking place in this region of the world.

Two additional bills, the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act and a bill to amend the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996, seek to increase pressure

on the government of Iran to halt its uranium enrichment program. The Iran Sanctions Enabling Act authorizes state and local governments to divest from companies with \$20 million or more invested in Iran's energy industry. A second bill amends the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 to expand and clarify the entities against which sanctions may be imposed. As Iran relies heavily on foreign investment in its energy sector, these bills will effectively suffocate Iran's resources.

The Federal legislation paves the way for states to make smart, conscious decisions regarding the investment of employee pension funds and other public investments. As the first state to enact divestment legislation, the State of Florida has taken the lead in protecting state interests from reprehensible regimes. I applaud the Florida legislature and all of the community organizations that pressed for this important initiative.

Madam Speaker, the powerful economic tool of divestment makes it clear to Sudan's complicit government and Iran's egomaniacal leadership that the United States and the American people stand strong in the battle against genocide, extremism, and corrupt governance. I congratulate the Members of the House of Representatives for their work on these issues and urge my colleagues to support these three important bills.

UNITED AMBULANCE SERVICE HONORED AS MAINE'S ONLY CAAS ACCREDITED AGENCY

HON. THOMAS H. ALLEN

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 30, 2007

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, this year, United Ambulance Service of Lewiston/Auburn, Maine received accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS), making it the first and only ambulance service in Maine and one of only about 107 ambulance services in the country currently to hold this distinction.

United Ambulance is jointly owned by Central Maine Medical Center and St. Mary's Regional Medical Center. Since 1981, it has served the citizens of Androscoggin County, Maine, including the towns and cities of Auburn, Greene, Lewiston, Minot, Mechanic Falls, New Gloucester, and Sabattus.

The CAAS accreditation reflects compliance with national standards of excellence and a continuing commitment to maintaining compliance with these standards. The Commission is a non-profit organization established to encourage and promote quality patient care in America's medical transportation system. Its national standards address the delivery of patient care, the service's total operation, and its relationships with other agencies, the public and the medical community. According to CAAS, accreditation signals that the ambulance service "has met the 'gold standard' determined by the ambulance industry to be essential in a modern emergency medical services provider." In addition, the standards for accreditation often surpass those set forth by local or State regulation.

The communities served by United Ambulance have been the beneficiary of excellent service since the founding of United Ambulance. The CAAS accreditation acknowledges